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ABSTRACT

The November 1989 conference described in this document was about social dialogue in vocational education. An introduction summarizes the conference as a whole, pointing out that participants were able to hear reports of the situation in Denmark, Spain, Italy, France, and the European Community as a whole. Summaries of 10 individual presentations follow, including those by Theunissen, Piehl, Urfer, Schandorff, Manzanarez-Nunez, Valcavi, d'Iribarne, Ramoff, Sellin, and Jones. The document concludes with a description of a round table workshop. (CML)

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THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL PARTNERS IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING

CEDEFOP Round-Table Conference in Paris, 7 and 8 November 1989

The conference organized by CEDEFOP and the French members of its governing board on the theme of the social dialogue in vocational training took place in Paris on 7 and 8 November 1989. At the conference, representatives of the social partners in France stressed the importance of developing social dialogue at Community level and expressed their desire to work together. Mr Ramoff pointed out in his conclusion that what is essential are the ends that are being pursued, not the means. With a view to Europe, he singled out three goals:

- promoting individual right to training
- encouraging the development of proper training schemes in companies
- emphasizing the interdependence of State and company areas of competence, since these are not watertight.

For the French government, said Mr Ramoff, Europe is a matter of justice, efficiency and the protection of European values. Through social dialogue Europe can make its mark by launching innovative ideas and achieving concrete results.

During the conference, that was held under the joint chairmanship of Ms Theunissen, Chairman of CEDEFOP's governing board, and Mr Ramoff, Délégué à la Formation Professionnelle, both sides of industry were able to hear reports on the situation in Denmark, Spain and Italy, as well as an analysis, by Mr d'Iribarne, of the general situation within the Community; participants also took part in several Round-Table workshops.

The conclusions show that the issues at stake are of

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such importance today that it is necessary to go beyond the opinion voiced by the social partners during the discussions at Val Duchesse. This opinion should be taken as a basis for further and more in-depth discussions. The ambiance, during those two days of informal discussions, was good. Away from the limelight, the meeting fostered better understanding between participants. As Ms Theunissen pointed out in her conclusion, "it enabled the participants to get to know other systems and assess their own in the light of others".

Report on the Conference

The report that follows summarizes, one after the other, the various papers that were presented during those two days.

Introductory address by Ms Theunissen

The aim of the conference is to examine the role and place of both sides of industry in vocational and continuous training so as to redefine areas of responsibility.

It is democracy and general policy that are at stake here for the European Community. The Single Act is modifying the field of regulatory powers and this may lead to a wide movement of privatization in the public sector. The State is invested with a new role - that of a regulator. Moreover vocational training is now part of company management as a way of keeping up with evolving technology and know-how. Training has become part of any career.

Unless we want to run the risk of seeing the segmentation of training and the labour market, we must redefine the whole field of training and the public it is targeted at. The role of public authorities is to ensure that all target groups can benefit from quality training and to avoid exclusion and second-rate training.

Training needs today are specific for some and broad for others. Are there any links that may be established between the two?

In Ms Theunissen's view, the role of vocational training is:
- to foster adaptability in individuals

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- to ensure progression in professional careers
- to prevent restructuration
- to relieve unemployment.

In this context the role of the social partners is important and wide-ranging; through the processes of concertation, consultation and negotiation, they take part in the assessment of needs and the selection of programmes. They also have a say in the evaluation of the effects of programmes that have been implemented. They are involved in all Member States of the Community, though the degree of their involvement may vary.

Social dialogue exists at several levels:
- on a geographical plan - at European, national, regional and local levels
- in the economic, social and cultural sectors
- in teaching and at school
- at institutional level.

The next two days should be spent in trying to identify different models and assess the result of changes that have taken place at Community level.

Address by Mr Piehl

As far as CEDEFOP is concerned, the aim of the series of Round-Table workshops is:
- to provide the basis for an exchange of practical data
- to impart the latest information on social dialogue
- to enable an assessment to be made and to work out prospects in a European context.

The conference is the result of a study undertaken in the twelve Member States of the Community, that led to the publication of twelve national monographs, a summary report and a special issue of the publication "Vocational Training".

This series of national conferences will be complemented by a European conference in Berlin in 1991 and a second such conference in Brussels in 1993.

The following two questions should be included in the discussion:
- the social dialogue is being carried out in a number of ways and at many levels: is there a common trend at

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all those levels?
- are there any French experiences or proposals that may improve controls at all levels?

Address by Mr Urfer, Chargé de Mission, Délégation à la Formation Professionnelle

Concertation in France

In France concertation between the social partners exists within companies, at local authority level and at national level. Vocational training has become a privileged field for the social dialogue. Negotiations on the issue of training and professional up-dating have led to the agreement of 9 July 1970, that establishes provisions for vocational training at constitutional level. Since this fundamental agreement, there have been several amendments in the development of the right to training. At the same time the entire subject of training has become a major issue for discussion between the social partners and public authorities. Thus the development of concertation on vocational training has been twofold: between the social partners, and with other actors on the scene, these being the State and the regions.

From 1970 onwards, collective agreement led to the establishment of new rights to vocational training and the setting up of training management systems: the situation has progressed from concertation to the bipartite management of organizations responsible for dealing with the new provisions. Since 1970 there has developed between the social partners and the State, then the regions, a constant dialogue that is ever deeper and richer in content.

The principle of compulsory financial participation to the development of vocational training may be found in the inter-occupational national agreement of July 1970. Amendments to this agreement, dated 21 September 1982 and 26 October 1983, have established new provisions that deal with the financing of individual training leave and linked work and training schemes for young people.

The Law of 24 February 1984 represents an important step in the development of vocational training. Indeed this text makes negotiation on that subject compulsory at professional branch level. Since that date

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negotiation procedures have followed a specific pattern: organizations, bound together by a branch or a professional agreement, must meet to discuss the ends and means of vocational training. Unless an agreement is reached within a specified time limit, the negotiations must open at company level. Thus, 180 branch agreements and 230 company agreements have been concluded. In content these have few compulsory provisions but a great many new recommendations. The impetus given to the process of concertation at both company and professional levels is complemented by an assessment of the technological and economic context in which the companies are functioning; a context that makes investments necessary , especially in the field of vocational training, to ensure the valorization of human resources. The agreements are thus valuable in that they shed light on the conditions enabling companies to face economic constraints.

The negotiation pattern set in 1984 does not exclude other forms of negotiations between the social partners. At times it even leads to the opening of negotiations within companies. Two basic "poles" for negotiation have emerged: at company and inter-occupational levels.

At company level, there are issues that show the evolution of social partners' concerns and the growing importance they place on vocational training. Training nowadays is considered to be an investment that is part of the company's pluri-annual plan. The budget for training schemes is thus included in current investments. Training becomes an essential element in companies' overall policy. The legal obligation imposed on employers to share in the financing of training is no longer regarded as a burden that may reduce the company's competitivity. The fact that companies have spent on average 2.57% (in 1987) of their total wages bill on training - whereas the legal rate is only 1.2 - bears witness to that.

The agreements we are talking about do not neglect the individual dimension of training. Training leaves, training credits during working time, and other measures fostering an individual approach to training may often be found in these agreements, over and beyond company training policy.

The second sphere of concertation is found at

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inter-occupational level. National inter-occupational texts are extremely important: they concern, for example, the setting up of concertation processes on technological change, or the establishment of the right to training in small companies. However, the application of the principles established at this level, entails, according to the wish of the contracting parties, new discussions at branch level. Thus the question may be raised whether the objective of these inter-occupational agreements has not changed significantly over the last few years: from establishing rights, these have gone on to establishing management systems.

The dialogue between the social partners is complemented by involved concertation between the different parties. Thus, the State has an active role to play in the proceedings. Following the various agreements, it brought about the establishment of various laws, such as the Law of 1971 or the Law of 24 February 1984, that brought significant changes to vocational training. The Law on individual training leave goes even further than the agreement itself: it enables employer and trade-union organizations to establish regulations that depart from the legislative and regulatory texts - thus taking into their own hands some of the State's prerogatives.

Public authorities have various modes of intervention, from concluding agreements with training agencies to signing agreements on the payment of trainees. Exchanges with the social partners are still largely indirect. The collective agreement policy with equal-representation organizations supervising individual training leave (CIF) and the legally-binding collective agreement policy with occupational branches are significant. The State awards contracts in the case of commitments to develop vocational training or forecast studies.

Similarly the State encourages companies to modernize by inciting them to use negotiation. The Law of 3 August 1989 concerning dismissals is a good illustration of this.

The social partners are involved in the planning of the vocational training policy of public authorities. They are consulted through the National Council for Vocational Training and Social Promotion (Conseil National de la Formation Professionnelle et de la

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Promotion Sociale) and its Standing Committee; they are also involved in the allocation of public funds through the Management Council of the Vocational Training Fund (Conseil de Gestion du Fonds de la Formation Professionnelle).

It may be said that, on the whole, the French vocational training system, which is largely a product of collective bargaining, has asserted itself as an instrument for social progress.

Address by Mr Schandorff, Danish Employers' Organization

Social dialogue has been practised in Denmark for over a hundred years, which gives us a wide experience of the subject.

Take the case of apprenticeship. In Denmark the social partners attach great importance to the training of young people. The apprenticeship system enables young people to make a good choice, even at a social level. The labour market recognizes the results of apprenticeship and enables people who have undergone this form of training to work in a number of countries.

Within Denmark, training supply is always regulated in relation to training demand. The social dialogue also develops through the "trades" system, in which discussions are not distorted by politics but have a practical purpose. The "trades" system regulates vocational training by analyzing needs in general, company needs and demand for professional qualifications.

Last, but not least, it should be pointed out that 40% of young people avail themselves of the apprenticeship system.

Address by Mr Manzanarez-Nunez, UGT Secretary and member of the CEDEFOP management board in Madrid.

The General Council for Vocational Training, a tripartite consultative organization, was set up as a result of the economic and social agreement of October 1984. Its role is to organize and coordinate initial training (National Education) and vocational

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training (National Institute for Employment). It is also involved in making sure that the contents of training programmes are implemented.

The social partner situation in Spain is characterized by the fact that negotiation takes place with two partners (the State and trade-unions) against one (the Employers). As a result it is difficult for the Council to be a flexible tool for concertation. Moreover it has no infrastructure to speak of and is thus too closely linked to the Ministry of Labour.

To deal with the important gaps in its basic knowledge, the Council would need additional resources to coordinate basic and vocational training schemes.

In the field of continuing training there are no agreements for the time being, although research work and discussions are taking place on that subject. Neither is there any paid training leave. The debate at present concerns the possibility of minimal legislation to complement agreements with companies. More generally, UGT is striving to bring about minimal European agreements in order to face the precarious employment situation that is the present trend in Spain and other countries of the Community.

Address by Mr Valcavi, Chargé de mission to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Rome.

In Italy, the training system is two-fold.

One part of it is integrated within the educational system. It is a state system with indirect participation of the social partners (through Chambers of Commerce and Industry).

The other part is organized outside the educational system, in training centres. It is a regional system, a fact that has led to an improvement of training schemes and programmes in the more developed regions of Italy. Other regions, on the other hand, are facing considerable problems in this area.

Furthermore an important place is given to social dialogue in certain branches - in the construction and paper industries, for instance, where training centres with equal-representation management have been set up.

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At present, the trend is to focus on out-of-school vocational training. Changes are being brought about by the increased interest of the social partners, especially with regard to the quality of available training. The social partners are pressing for a fuller participation and more control of companies and programme evaluation.

Within vocational training, the social dialogue is less conflictual than in other areas where it is taking place.

The setting up of the European social dialogue is a good opportunity for the social partners in Italy to give the situation within their own country a new boost and interest.

Address by Mr d'Iribarne, CNRS, Paris.

A comparative analysis of social dialogue practices in the different countries of the Community shows how varied these practices are in initial and vocational training, both with regard to their development and their conception and concrete implementation. There appears to be, however, a general trend towards the setting up of a number of "areas" or spheres where dialogue might take place as well as proceedings or mechanisms. Taken together, these might be tantamount to a "system" with convergence at several levels: centralized, intermediary (sectoral and territorialized) or decentralized levels in companies and plants.

Overall, the social dialogue in the field of training is but a reflection of the general state of the social dialogue in different countries, even though - as is the case for company-financed continuing training - it represents a privileged area of progress. Improvement in this area, however, cannot take place without improvement in other areas of social dialogue. Regression in social dialogue - as is the case in the United Kingdom, for instance - cannot but affect training.

The place of social dialogue in a country may be assessed through the number and variety of ways it is applied. There are two main roles it can play , neither of which has a clear advantage over the other. It may intervene in an advisory capacity - this is

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consultative opinion - or it may intervene in a decision-making capacity. In the latter case, dialogue leads to co-management. In practice, matters can only be settled if co-management is endowed with certain powers. (Mr Piehl has pointed out that in Germany co-decision must not be taken to mean the same thing as co-management.)

The place of social dialogue may also be analyzed through the image given by the various elements in the "system" we mentioned earlier. What is important is the performance of the entire system, not just one of of its elements. This will help sort out the place to be assigned to the various levels - company, sector or region. The French tradition, with its national and sectoral approach, may thus be set against the Italian and British traditions, with their greater emphasis on territoriality. In every case, the place of the company remains a key issue. Can the company alone be given a major role as a privileged sphere for the social dialogue, to the detriment of other spheres? Here again, the answer depends on the disparities that may be observed in concrete situations within companies: if these are too big, it becomes necessary to structure the dialogue at company level.

Finally, the social dialogue is not the product of institutional decisions alone. It is important to know how these institutions work in reality: how "present" all the relevant parties are, how active in their proposals, etc. This largely depends on their bargaining strength and the number and quality of their members. This may easily lead to an apparent paradox: a reduction in the real possibilities of a social dialogue through too large a number of spheres of dialogue.

What are the roles of the different actors in France? To quote Mr Seguin, one might say that"the State must establish the rules and standards that are discussed by the social partners as well as ensure their implementation." Collective agreement policy must adapt itself to economic and social reality. Legislative authorities must intervene only after discussions and agreements have taken place between the social partners. The objective is to do away with as many inequalities as possible in the access to training.

The conditions to be met are as follows:

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- dealing with a conception of training that is close enough to the level of all the actors involved
- the will to engage in a dialogue with a view to action
- the setting up of measures to ensure that the system will work
- adequate quantitative and qualitative skills
- tools and instruments

Conclusions of the first day by Mr Ramoff

The positive points of the social dialogue in the field of vocational training are as follows:

For employers and trade-unions:

- Companies are increasingly interested in training for young people, and, more particularly, in linked work and training schemes
- Agreements are beginning to be signed
- Negotiations are closer to reality and more in-depth.

For the State

- the establishment of compulsory negotiation
- The recognition that the other side exists (i.e. the end of "Colbertism")

Progress still remains to be made in the following spheres:

- The involvement of companies
- Filling gaps when the involvement of companies is not sufficient
- Fostering negotiations at branch levels
- Negotiations must go beyond vocational training, to include initial training and work organization
- Training recognition at an official level
- Decentralization, and the problems this raises: here improvement must be made through greater attention paid to the social partners, the reserves of the State and interaction with the sectoral approach.

Address by Mr Sellin, Project Coordinator, CEDEFOP.

The CEDEFOP project on the role of the social partners was launched in 1986. The study covered the

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institutional framework for the social partners in each Member State. It showed a great divergence between countries and between each branch as well. There is, however, a larger number of convergent trends at branch level.

Research work took place at European, national and regional levels, where the dialogue is tripartite, whereas at branch level, there is a greater tendency for it to be bipartite. One of the goals of the research was to identify the social partners' level of participation.

In the area of continuing training in the Member States, responsibility for it remains largely that of management, except in the case of France. The study also shows that continuing training affects mostly white-collar employees - a situation that raises the issue of target groups and of the risks presented by the 1993 deadline. Efforts must be centered on unskilled or low-qualified workers. The EC "FORCE" Programme on the continuing training of workers is concerned with this very issue.

Address by Mr Jones, Director, Task Force for Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth, EC Commission.

In January 1989, Mr Delors relaunched, on a new basis, the issue of the social dialogue that is part of the European Single Act. A monitoring group was set up to this effect. This group meets whenever necessary (two meetings have already taken place in 1989) and has even itself generated two working groups, one of which is working on vocational training and education and the other on the consequences of the Internal Market.

As far as the social dialogue is concerned, The Commission's role is that of a "moderator" and it also provides technical assistance. Behind the scene, it gives a hand in clarifying issues and obtaining results.

1989 is an important year for vocational training. In January, the Commission set up a new strategy to stress the importance of human resources that are a key element for economic and social development: this is the Task Force for Human Resources, Education,

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Training and Youth.

The Commission is trying to find an answer to two issues. These are:
- the introduction of new technologies that must be integrated in all spheres
- the demographic impact that results from the decrease in the number of young people, and that raises a serious challenge. Ecah worker will have to change his profession several times during his active life.

The Commission is keen to establish a new social climate and the Social Charter is a step in that direction. Eleven countries have already agreed to the revised text. It will most probably be adopted in December at a meeting of the European Council in Strasbourg.

1989 saw also the revision of the three Funds (ESF, ERDF, FEOGA), resources for which will double by 1993. Similarly, it saw the continuation of programmes such as COMETT II, ERASMUS II, LINGUA and EUROTECNET II. Another action programme, FORCE, within which the social dialogue will play a very prominent role, will be proposed following the Council's decision on continuing training.

Round-Table workshop on the Val Duchesse meeting

Participants: Mr Joberton (FO), MR Poupard (CNPF), Mr Tissier (CFDT), Mr Boussat (CNPF), Mr Rath (CES), Mr Terrier (CLE), Mme Paulet (member of CEDEFOP's g.b.), Mr Moreau (CES)

On the whole participants underlined the importance of the work achieved during the discussions that took place in the framework of the social dialogue (working group on education and training). Mr Poupard talked of the "will to progress while respecting the practices of other Member States and caution in 'exporting' the French model of continuing training". All actors concerned recognize that there is still a shortage of training in Europe and that this very training is at the basis of European quality. Also stressed was the fact that there is a lack of common concepts between the different actors, and the difficulty of achieving dialogue at Community level. "We must find something specific to the European

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scene", said Mr Tissier. Several participants recognized the important role played by the Commission in giving an impetus to projects and providing technical assistance. The situation, nevertheless, is slightly ambiguous, for the Commission is trying to pressurize things into results, which raises a problem with regard to working methods.

On the subject of initial training, there was no major difficulty during the discussions, as everyone recognized the all-important role played by the State. It was agreed, nevertheless, that companies should also be involved. In this area, France seems to be lagging behind its partners. In Mr Rath's opinion, one should not underestimate the achievements that have already been made in this area. "Every young person must be able to undergo initial training aimed at achieving a duly recognized professional qualification. The question that is so far unanswered is 'how?' " At the end of their compulsory education all young people must have access to two years of vocational training leading to a recognized qualification.

Views on the subject of continuing vocational training were more divergent. For Mr Joberton, there are three questions at the core of the European debate: "Who decides? Who finances? When must training take place?" Practical aspects and objectives differ between Member States. Mr Boussat stressed the need to understand different cultures - to understand, for instance, how French formalism , that leads to the adoption of Laws, differs from, say, German pragmatism. From this viewpoint one may understand why the French system of continuing training does not seem attractive to European employers. Generally, however, participants agreed that it was necessary to encourage companies to integrate continuing vocational training into their strategies. For Mr Rath, company project and salaried workers' project must relate.

"Within the proposed framework," said Mr Tissier, this is the best result that could be achieved." In Mr Terrier's view, "the joint-opinion text is on the whole an acceptable compromise. Social dialogue is now moving forward on more clear-cut issues". Mr Moreau expressed the wish that the social dialogue might develop in a broader context than just employer-trade-union relations so as to avoid being restricted to certain actors and certain spheres.

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At the end of the Round-Table workshop, Mme. Paulet reminded the participants of the role played by CEDEFOP in the social dialogue. CEDEFOP may be considered to be a "tool"; it provides technical assistance in the way of data on policies and practical measures adopted by the different Member States, as well as on training needs for engineers and low-qualified workers. As from 1989, with the development of social dialogue, CEDEFOP will be entering a new phase.

Mme Paulet underlined the importance of the social dialogue in the work undertaken by CEDEFOP on the comparability of qualifications between EC Member States as a result of the Council's decision of 1985 and at the Commission's request.

The plan to go on with other Round-Table workshops met with general approval, as did the decision to hold two European conferences, one in Berlin in 1991, and the other in Brussels in 1993.

Note

FO = Force Ouvrière
CNDF = Confédération Nationale du Patronat Français
CFDT = Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail
CES = Confédération Européenne des Syndicats
CLE = Comité de Liaison des Employeurs
CES = Comité Economique et Social

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